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Book



A
P R O P O S A L
F O R
RELIEF and PUNISHMENT
O F
V A G R A N T S, &c.



[Price Sixpence.]

1608/2461

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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L. Buck A. M. G.

PROPOSAL
FOR
RELIEF and PUNISHMENT
OF
VAGRANTS,
Particularly
Such as frequent the Streets and Pub-
lick Places of Resort,
WITHIN THIS KINGDOM.



L O N D O N :

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A
P R O P O S A L

F O R
RELIEF and PUNISHMENT
of V A G R A N T S, &c.

WHoever walks the Streets of the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, or elsewhere within this Kingdom, can't but be touched with the miserable State of many wretched Creatures, daily appearing in Publick as seeming Objects of Compassion, but upon Inquiry are found to be Persons who have inured themselves to a Life of Idleness, and by their Vices have brought upon themselves the Disasters under which they labour, and thereby draw from charitable and well-disposed Christians that Relief, which ought only to be bestowed (in a legal manner) upon such who by the Almighty's Visitation, Accidents in an honest and laudable Calling, or by Defects of Nature, are reduced to Necessity. This in a populous and trading Country has long called for Redress, and tho' several Attempts have been made for this Purpose, yet hitherto they have not succeeded as expected.

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That

That in this Kingdom are proper Laws for taking care of our parochial Poor is certain, but even that those have in some measure contributed to the Evil complain'd of, is much to be suspected; for when we consider the many Stratagems made use of to keep the Poor from being burthensome to Parishes, we shall soon see various Instances of idle Employments, contrived by Parish Officers, such as the Blind and Lame begging at Gates in the Highways and other Places, where Huts are either erected for them, or permitted to be erected by themselves, where they attend to receive that Charity from Passengers which they ought to receive from the Parishes to which they belong. How improper such Objects are for such Places, no one can be long at a Loss to surmise; the Consequences that have happened to Women big with Child, furnish us with strong Reasons for endeavouring to prevent such Persons even appearing in Publick.

To relieve real Objects of Charity is an Act of great Humanity, and 'tis with Reluctance that a Person can pass by an Object over-run with Sores, or afflicted in any other visible manner (which are indeed sometimes the Effect of Art) and not relieve them: But upon considering what Care is taken by the Laws of this Country for this Purpose, a Man is apt to determine with himself that such Persons have no Occasion to lie there, and at
once

once either closes his Compassion toward a real Object, or gives his Charity to those who are rather Objects of Justice, and who, perhaps, belong to a Gang of Thieves. How frequently do we meet with Instances of Beggars who come in the most suppliant manner, make out a long compassionate Case, but when they find that their Cheat is discovered, and that they are not likely to gain their Ends, turn the rough Side of their Tongues, and, were the Place proper, would perhaps take another way of being supplied, that is, by Force take from you what your Discretion thought proper to deny? Others there are, who by carrying about Children, labouring under infectious Diseases, or other Deformities, are to terrify you perhaps out of your Lives, for refusing to comply with their importunate Demands. Add to these the Consideration of the many Women and Children lying about the Streets, the latter of which are from their Births, till they arrive at the Age of ten or twelve Years of Age, scarce out of the Streets; by means of which they beget in themselves such an Habit, that when their riper Years come on, they betake themselves to Practices the most enormous, the Wages of which are Destruction.

Instances of each of these kinds, the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, and Places adjacent, furnish us with almost every Hour; and when we come to recollect the many Pa-

ish Officers of several kinds, that are paid and cloathed by their respective Inhabitants, we should be at a Loss to consider what they are employ'd for. Do they ever meddle with, or endeavour to remove these publick Nufances? or is it not to be feared, that this in some Measure may give Countenance to think what has been said of those in Authority in higher Stations may be true, that they take Money to wink at such Breaches of the Law, as are found to bring in Profit to, or increase the profitable Part of their Profession? How often have we heard of Gaming-houses, Bawdy-houses, and other Houses not being suppressed, because they have paid a Rent to the neighbouring Magistrate? But, if these Officers are made to do their Duties, and it becomes the Interest of the Inhabitants of the Place to which they belong to enforce the Law, they may be made useful Members of Society, and bear a great Part in suppressing the Evil complain'd of.

Another Cause of this Evil is owing to the ignominious Name of an Informer; when this is taken away, and it becomes the Duty of every one to take a Part in this necessary Work, I flatter myself that I shall have some Hopes of seeing the Unfortunate relieved, the Profligate punished, and this Nation delivered from one of the greatest Scandals.

Perhaps I have now undertaken a Task, which I shall be told is encompassed with Difficulties, and that I have assumed to myself more
Know-

Knowledge than has appeared in many of our Ancestors for many Ages. This will not discourage me from offering my Thoughts to the Publick, and if they can be improved by a better Genius, I shall readily join in commending his Labours; for something is necessary, and I hope I shall not be censured for offering my Mite. I have had some Experience in these Affairs, and I have a good Wish for my Country, and I hope sincerely that this Matter will be considered by those who have the Honour to represent it. Nay, as this is a Case which can't interfere with Ministerial Schemes, I flatter myself that some of those who have *Heads* will exercise them upon this Occasion; for I dare aver, that a thing that contributes so much to the Publick Use, will make the great Burthens that they are forced to load us with, sit lighter upon us, and *they* may reap the Benefit of it.

6. Schemes of this kind have generally been received with Candour, and scarce even the greatest party Zealot has not thought it beneath him to employ an Hour in reading of 'em; if this hath that Fate, I know many Members of the present House of Commons, whose Abilities and Knowledge in these Affairs have often appeared to the Publick; and the great Person who presides in that Assembly, has often shewed his Talents on this Occasion.

I shall therefore submit (without farther Apology) my Thoughts to them, and hope,
they

they will deserve their Attention, so far as to judge of their Efficacy; and if a Bill can be framed from these Hints, or some other Person of better Abilities, frame one more proper of his own, I shall have great Satisfaction in having reminded them of it. And therefore in the first Place I observe, That

In every County of this Kingdom, there are at present Workhouses, or Houses of Correction; these may be encreased, if necessary, and put under such Regulations as may answer, in one Respect, the following Proposal. In most Corporate Towns and many Parishes, there are also Workhouses, and as some Part of these may be turned into Hospitals for the Purposes intended by this Scheme, the Country will not be laid under much greater Burthens than they now are; nay, when we consider, that they are only to maintain their own Poor, (which they are now by Law liable to) I think it will be only enforcing those Laws which are now in being, without the Addition of any new Burthen at all.

The S C H E M E.

- I. **T**HAT there be in every Parish within every County, City, and in every other Town or Place within this Kingdom, appointed a sufficient Number of Officers, such as Constables, Tythingmen, or Beadles, who

who shall daily make it their Business to resort to all publick Places, and other Places in the publick Streets, Lanes, and Highways, where loose, idle and disorderly Persons, or Beggars do usually frequent ; and do there, and in all other Places where they shall find any such loose, idle, and disorderly Persons, or any lame, sick, wounded, or diseased Persons lying about, in order to ask Charity, secure such Persons, and them carry before the next Magistrate, who shall examine them on Oath touching their last legal Settlements, and touching their way of Livelyhood, and their being relieved by any Person or Persons, and touching such other Matters as shall be necessary to be known, in order to put this Method in execution ; and upon such Examination, if their Places of Settlement shall appear, that such Magistrate shall take proper order for sending and conveying them to the same. But in case such Settlement cannot appear, to order them to be sent and convey'd to the Parish or Place within which for the Space of

they had last continued begging and were relieved, and not apprehended, where they shall be delivered to the Churchwardens and Overseers of such Parish or Place, or to such other Person or Persons, who hath or have the Care of the Poor of such Parish, Town, or Place, who are to receive such Persons as shall be so sent, and to deal with and provide for them as here after is directed.

2. Every

2. Every such Person so examined, giving a false Account of his Settlement, or any other Matter essential to this Proceeding, or refusing to be examined, to be committed to the common Goal, and being lawfully convicted of such false Account, or of refusing to be examin'd, to be transported.

3. Every Person whatever to be impowered to seize and apprehend any of the said Persons as above described, and to carry and deliver them to any such Officer as aforesaid, who shall pay such Person so apprehending such Persons as aforesaid, the Sum of upon such Person's being proved to be a Vagrant, or other such Person hereby described ; and such Officer shall carry such Person so apprehended and brought to him, before some Justice, to be dealt with as aforesaid.

4. Every such Constable or Officer neglecting his Duty in apprehending such Persons as aforesaid, or refusing to pay the Reward aforesaid, to forfeit and lose the Sum of to be levy'd by Distress and Sale of the Goods of the Offender, and paid into the Parish Stock, towards defraying the Expences of apprehending and conveying such Persons as hereby directed.

5. Every Inhabitant of any Parish or Place permitting any such Persons as aforesaid, to continue near their Doors, or relieving any such Persons without causing them to be apprehended, to forfeit to be recover'd and disposed of as aforesaid.

6. Any

6. Any Person or Persons lodging or entertaining any of the Persons described as aforesaid, knowing them to be such, to forfeit and lose to be recovered and disposed of as aforesaid.

7. Keepers of publick Houses, entertaining or lodging such Persons, knowing them to be such, to forfeit and lose to be levy'd and disposed of as aforesaid, and to be declared incapable of keeping a publick House for the future.

8. The Expences of apprehending and conveying such Persons to their respective Parishes, to be born jointly by the several Parishes where such Persons are apprehended and whereto they are sent, to be paid by the Churchwardens of each of such Parishes, and to be reimbursed by the Parish out of the Poor Rates.

9. Church-wardens Overseers, and other Officers, who have the Care of the Poor, to receive Persons so sent, pay the Money for their Conveyance, and to deal with, and provide for the Persons so sent, as herein after directed, *viz.*

10. To place all such Persons who are sick, lame, disordered, &c. in an House or Hospital, where they shall be confin'd, and provided for with Medicines and Necessaries, until they shall be cured; and then to take care that such Persons do betake themselves to some honest and virtuous Calling or Labour; and in case they shall not so do, and should be again apprehended

hended and brought home in manner aforesaid a second time, then to be treated in such manner as Beggars and Vagrants are herein after directed to be treated.

11. To place all Children under Years of Age, so sent home, in some Parish House, where they shall be taken care of, and employ'd till fit to be bound out to Husbandry as Parish Apprentices ; and bind out all Boys above the Age of Years, either to Husbandry or the Sea Service, and all Girls to Housewifery in the same manner ; and Seamen and Seafaring Men using the Sea, or Captains of Men of War, to be obliged to take Boys Apprentices as aforesaid, in such manner the Legislature shall think fit.

12. To carry all Vagrants or sturdy Beggars before some Magistrate, who shall commit them to the County Bridewells or Workhouses, there to be kept to hard Labour until they shall give Security not to offend again in the like manner ; and in case they shall afterwards so offend, and be lawfully convicted, they shall be liable to be transported.

13. Church-wardens and other Officers, to register the Orders of Removals sent to them, and the Times of the Receipt thereof, and then transmit them to the Clerk of the Peace, to be kept amongst the Records of the County, and the Clerk of the Peace to receive and file the same without Fee.

14. If

14. If any of the Persons so apprehended have Money, or other things, the same to be secured and applied towards the Expences of this Proceeding, and the Remainder only paid as aforesaid.

15. Inhabitants of Parishes and Places to nominate and appoint Matrons and other Officers of Hospitals, and the said Matrons and Officers to be paid such Sallaries as are proper, and the same to be paid out of the Poores Rate.

16. Idle and disorderly Persons sent to the County Workhouse refusing to labour, to be corrected, and otherwise punished, by restraining their Allowance of Meat, or kept chain'd.

17. No Vagrant so committed to the County Workhouse, to be discharged but at the Quarter Sessions, when they are to be registered and recorded ; so that upon their Offending again, they may the more be easily convicted, which Register, and proving the Identity of the Persons, shall be sufficient Evidence for convicting such Vagrant in order for Transportation.

18. Lame and wounded Seamen apprehended, to be taken Care of by *Greenwich* Hospital, and the Expence provided for by the Publick.

19. Other Seamen begging without Passes or proper Authorities, to be sent to the County Workhouse, and from thence convey'd and put on board some Man of War,

from whence, if they run away, to be treated as Deserters.

20. A Register of such Persons to be kept in the Parish where apprehended, and to what Parish they were sent.

21. Privy Searches to be made in a Week in all Cities and Towns Corporate, and Market Towns, and in a Month in all other Parishes and Places, and all Persons apprehended, who cannot give a good Account of themselves and of their way of Living, or who shall appear under any of the former Descriptions, to be carry'd before the Magistrate, who is to deal with them as the Nature of their Case shall deserve.

22. Forging of Passes by Seamen, or others pretending to be such, Felony; Rates for passing and conveying such Persons to be settled, and Proceedings before Justices to be allowed in such a manner as may make this Scheme the least Burthenfome, and the same to be inserted in the Pass or Warrant for conveying; as for Example,

23. *The Persons here-with sent, are to be guarded by Men on Foot, or on Horseback, or in a Cart, as the Case shall be, who are to convey the said Persons to the Place above directed in the Space of Days, and to be allowed for the same after the Rate of as directed by the Statue in this Case made and provided; and each of the said Persons are to be allowed per Day for their Subsistence, which together with the Sum of*
paid

paid for this Warrant and Examination, is the whole Expence of Conveyance of the said Persons, to be paid jointly by the Parish of wherein the said Persons were apprehended, and by the Parish of to which they are now sent.

24. A Copy of the Examination of the Vagrant, &c. to be annexed to the Warrant, and sign'd by the Justice before whom they shall be taken; which said Examination so authenticated, shall be given in Evidence upon any Proceedings in relation to the said Persons.

25. Persons aggrieved by order of Conveyance, to Appeal to the Quarter Sessions for the County where the Parish is situate, to which such Vagrant, &c. is sent; and in Case it should appear, that such Person or Persons so convey'd, hath, or have given a false Account of their Settlement, such Person or Persons shall be committed to the common Goal, in order to be prosecuted as aforesaid, and their Families convey'd to such Place as shall appear to such Court of Sessions to be the Place of their last legal Settlement, at the joint Expence of the County where such Appeal is heard, and the Parish to which such Persons are sent upon such Appeal.

27. The Officers of the Parish appealing, to give Notice to the Parish where such Settlement is apprehended to be Days before such Quarter Sessions, and the Grounds
of

of their Appeal, and the Determination of Sessions to be final : Justices of the Peace concern'd in Interest, not to act in this Case.

Thus far is propos'd in relation to Vagrants, &c. within the Kingdom of *England* ; but the most difficult Part remains, what is to be done with Foreigners of this kind, either *Irish* or others ? And here I can only say, I have turn'd my Thoughts in the best manner I can, and hope they will be found capable of Practice ; if so, I flatter myself, that I have answered the long-expected Wishes of Men, who have formerly endeavour'd at a Method for this End, but have hitherto been disappointed ; first I propose,

That *Ireland* be compelled to submit to such Part of this Act as will be necessary to carry it into Execution, as to Persons of that Kingdom, and the Officers resident in that Kingdom to do their Parts towards it ; this must be the Foundation, and if this be made effectual, the Difficulty will undoubtedly vanish ; and then that all *Irish* Beggars, and others described by this Act, and apprehended in manner therein directed, to be conveyed from the Parish or Place where apprehended to the proper Port, and delivered to the Constables and chief Officers of such Port where landed, who shall carry them before the proper Magistrate (after having registered their Names and Places of Abode, with the chief Officers of the Customs of such Port where they were landed) which Magistrates shall enforce the
Pass

Pass or Warrant, in order for such Persons to be convey'd to the Places of their legal Settlements, where they shall be delivered to the proper Officers to be taken care of in the same manner as those in *England*. And any such returning afterwards to *England*, to ported.

No Master of a Ship to bring any Person (not having visible Means of Maintenance) from *Ireland* to *England*, without a Certificate of their Settlement, to be proved before and registred by the chief Officer of the Customs of the Port where taken on Board, and upon landing in *England*, carry such Person to the chief Officer of the Customs of such Port in *England* where they land, who shall register and file the same, and upon producing the said Certificate so sign'd before the next Magistrate, such Magistrate shall grant such *Irishman* a Pass or Permit, to go to the Place he intends; and every such Person shall, upon coming to such Place, register his Certificate with the Church-wardens and Overseers of the Place where he resides, who shall transmit the same to any other Parish to which he shall afterwards remove, to be treated in like manner. Every such Master of Ship, &c. acting contrary, to forfeit and lose and bear the Expence of reconveying such Person to *Ireland*.

All *Irish* Labourers, inhabiting within this Kingdom, to register their Names and Places of Abode, with the Officers of the Parish
where

where they reside, to be kept in a Book for that Purpose.

Persons coming from *Ireland* (not having visible Means of Support) and not having such Certificates or Registers themselves, to be deemed Vagrants.

Parishes in *Ireland* to bear Expences of re-conveying poor Persons to *Ireland*, by Virtue of such Certificates.

No Captain of Vessel to bring any Women or Children (into *England*) unless such as are of sufficient Ability to maintain themselves, under proper Penalty.

Punishment for forging Certificates or Passes, or for such as shall not produce one.

Proper Penalties to enforce Custom-House Officers to do their Duty. These are the Methods for treating *Irishmen*. As to other Foreigners, I am now to consider.

Vagrant Foreigners, appearing so upon Examination, to be convey'd to the nearest Port abroad to their respective Countries, where they are to be landed, and coming into *England* again after so exported, to be deem'd Felons, and transported to the *English* Plantations, and being found in *England* again after such Transportation, to be punish'd as Persons returning from Transportation. Captains of Ships bound to such so reign Parts, obliged to take 'em on board, and convey them to their native Countries, or to the next Port to such native Country.

Seamen

A Register to be kept of all *Irish* and Foreigners apprehended by Virtue of the Act, and transmitted to the Clerk of the Peace for the County where apprehended.

Not to extend to any *Irish* or Foreigner hired as a Covenant Servant with any *English* or *Irish* Person residing in *England*.

This is the Scheme ; and as there may Objections arise in the Minds of some, I shall beg leave to say something to illustrate the Reasonableness of it.

The first Objection that may arise will be, that the strict Execution of this Scheme will be very expensive to the Cities of *London* and *Westminster* : To this I answer, that all these Persons are Inhabitants of the several Parishes where they are found, and are by the Laws now in being, to be provided for as such till they remove them, and this Method is but half the Expence of a common Order of Removal.

That these Sorts of Persons continuing in the Streets are publick Nuisances, won't be denied, and that the permitting them to continue there, is owing to the Inhabitants of the Houses adjoining ; so that Part of this Scheme that compells such Householders to have them taken up, can never be thought unreasonable.

The authorizing any Body to seize such Persons is what is now enacted, but wants to be enforced, and the subjecting the Offi-

cers to a Penalty for Neglect, is certainly reasonable.

One of the great Causes of these Evils is the entertaining of the Persons; therefore a Remedy for that part of it, necessary.

The ascertaining the Expence of Conveyances of Vagrants, &c. in great measure takes off the Inconveniencies of our present Laws, and the doing it by the Justice of the County or Place passing them, is certainly the most impartial, as the Expence is to fall on each Parish jointly, especially as Justices who are interested are not to act in this Case, and the Appeal being order'd to be at the Sessions for the County to which they are sent, and the Appellants to give such Notice as directed, will make that easy for the Parish from whence the said Vagrants are removed, will have no Trouble unless the Settlement is found out to be in such Parish, which would have been the Case on an Order of Removal,

As to the *Irish* and Foreign Scheme, 'tis calculated in such a manner as I think will only effectually do it, and were the Laws for *Ireland* made such as would enforce the Execution of it, I can see no Objection to it. It may indeed be said, it will be loading the Custom-house Officers of both this and that Kingdom with an increase of Duty. If this be thought so, an increase of Salary will make Retaliation for it.

Upon the whole, let it be considered, that a regular Execution of a Scheme of this kind,
may

may by the Divine Blessing be attended with the utmost Advantage to the Nation in General ; for by it many real Objects of Charity will be relieved, many useful Subjects reclaimed from a State of Perdition ; many Children that are now in the most miserable Condition, and have their Education amongst the most execrable Reprobates, who breed them up Enemies to Mankind, Thieves and Murderers, will have an Education, that will enable them to become useful Subjects and Servants to the Publick ; and others, who have long been the greatest Villains, be brought to a deserved Punishment ; and more than all this, that great and just Reproach of Foreigners against us for almost tolerating Beggary and Idleness be removed. If no more than these were to be the Advantages of it, it were a sufficient Motive for every one to attempt it, and to pass over some small Inconveniences which particular Places or People may be liable to, and which, after a Law of this kind had been for some time regularly executed, would vanish: for I think, I am almost confident to hope, that it would entirely put a Stop to the Evil so long and justly complain'd of, and for this sole Reason, when once these People find they can't be shelter'd from Justice, they will be forced to turn to some lawful and commendable Employment, and forsake that most scandalous one of Idleness and Beggary.



